

Church of Ponds
Oakland Road and Franklin Lakes Road
Oakland, Bergen County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Church of Ponds
Oakland Road and Franklin Lakes Road
Oakland, Bergen County, New Jersey

Owner:

Date of Erection: 1829

Architect:

Builder: Cornelius Demarest

Present Condition: Razed since the survey

Number of Stories: One with gallery, cupola

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - brown stone
in front, rough rubble on sides
and rear; siding gables

Interior walls - plaster,
arch ceiling

Roof - pitch

Historical Data:

The first Church of Ponds was a log hut built in 1710; this was followed by an octagonal stone building in 1740. The structure of the survey was built in 1829 from the stone of the second church. This last building was torn down a short time ago. The present Church of Ponds, not on the same site, is a modern wood shingled frame building of nondescript character.

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The Church of Ponds is so called because of the number of ponds in the vicinity. It was founded to serve the twenty-five or thirty families settled in this clearing of the forest.

The history of Ponds would not be complete without mentioning Domine Gillian Bertholf, born in Holland in 1656, who came to America in 1683. He arrived in Hackensack in 1692 after having lived in several North Jersey communities. He was sent back to Holland in 1693 to be regularly ordained at the Classis of Middleburg. Returning home in 1694, he began his work of thirty years. For fifteen years, between 1694 and 1709, he was the only Dutch minister in New Jersey, and founded the churches of Tarrytown and Tappan in New York, and the churches of Acquackanonck, Freehold, Middletown, Raritan, Three Mile Run, Readington, Belleville, Ponds, Schraalenburg, Staten Island.

From 1710 to 1748 Church of Ponds was in combination with the Church of Acquackanonck (Passaic). From 1748 to 1793 Ponds was combined with Paramus, Ramapo (Mahwah) and West New Hempstead. During the Revolution when the Court House and jail were burned at Hackensack by the British, the Bergen County Court was transferred to the Church of Ponds. From 1793 to 1845 Ponds was combined with the churches of Wyckoff and Preakness. Since 1845 Ponds has had its own pastors without sharing their services.

The church of the survey was built during the pastorate of Reverend H. Kuypers. During the razing of the old hexagonal church and the construction of the new building, services were held in the barn of Peter S. Demarest.

In 1852 new pews were installed making a center aisle instead of the two aisles which conformed with the two entrances. In 1889 the square-head Colonial windows were replaced by pointed arch mullioned

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windows and a plastered barrelled ceiling was put in to cover the rugged trusses. The two entrances were blocked up and a new center entrance was installed. Other minor changes were made after that.

The church was discarded because the two tension members in each truss were lacking. The trusses spread and pushed the wall out of plumb and caused the cupola to tip backwards. Instead of preserving the ancient edifice the congregation erected the present shingled Church of Ponds.

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Tabor, Clarence H. Jr., local historian

Field Book and Drawings of Survey

Walter Pratt
Supervising Historian

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